

# NEWTON CORNER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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This segment of the FY11-15 Consolidated Plan contains the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan for neighborhood improvements in the Newton Corner target neighborhood. The document is broken down into two sections, each containing a number of subsections.

The Needs Assessment for the Newton Corner target neighborhood is broken down into the following subsections:

- **Demographic Information** – This subsection identifies the significant demographic characteristics of the neighborhood including population, race, age and household information.
- **Needs Assessment Process and Findings** – This subsection explains the process by which the needs assessment was conducted. The following subsections describe the neighborhood conditions.
  - **Traffic Needs** – This subsection describes the traffic needs and concerns in the target neighborhood.
  - **Parks/Open Space Needs** – This subsection presents the conditions of the passive and active recreational amenities at the parks and open spaces serving the residents in the target neighborhood.
  - **Public Infrastructure Needs** – This subsection identifies the major roadway, sidewalk and curb needs in the target neighborhood.
  - **Public Facilities Needs** – The subsection discusses the needs at any City-owned property, including schools and libraries in the target neighborhood.
- **Unmet Needs from FY06-10 Consolidated Plan** – This subsection lists the needs from the previous Consolidated Plan that have not been addressed.
- **Prominent Neighborhood Needs** – This subsection presents the needs identified by the City, the Newton Corner Advisory Committee, interested citizens and members of the public.

## Demographic Information

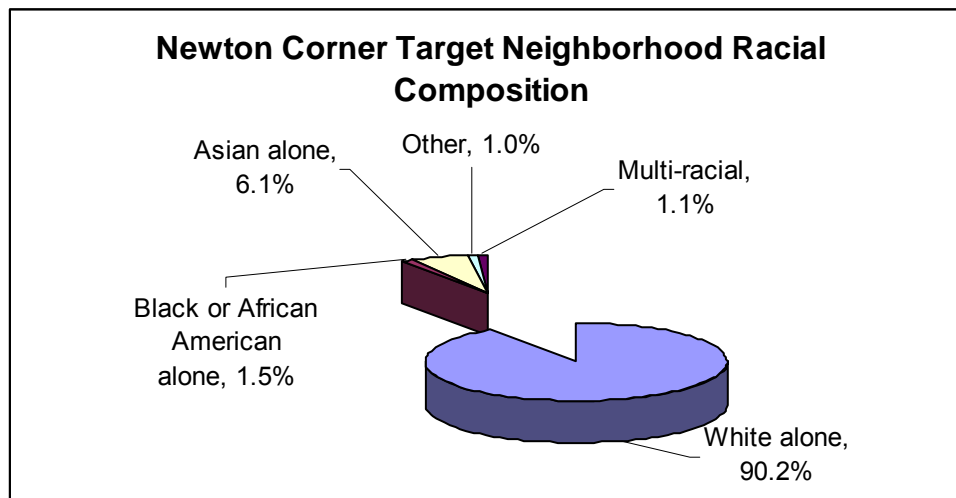
Part of Ward 1, the Newton Corner target neighborhood covers .24 square miles, encompassing two census block groups: 3731.03 and 3731.05. A total of 34.8% of the target neighborhood qualifies as low-moderate income, according to data generated in 2003 by HUD. There are four parks contained in the target neighborhood – Farlow Park, Chaffin Park, Charlesbank Park, and Carleton Park. Carleton Park, located on Carleton Place, is a pocket park ideal for passive recreation. Charlesbank Park, accessed from Nonantum Place, has play equipment and picnic benches. Chaffin Park, primarily used for passive recreation, is located at the corner of Centre and Vernon Streets and is

connected to Farlow Park. Farlow Park, the City's oldest park, is found at the intersection of Vernon and Church Streets. The parks are separated by the Newton Corner Branch library, adjacent from the Underwood Elementary School, and across the street from a privately operated assisted living complex. A fifth park- Boyd Park- lies outside the target neighborhood boundaries, between the Newton Corner and the Nonantum target neighborhoods and serves low- and moderate-income residents from both areas. It has therefore been deemed eligible for CDBG funding.

According to the U.S. Census 2000, the Newton Corner target neighborhood—which is bounded by Jewett Street, Church Street and Oakland Street on the west; the Town of Watertown on the north; St. James Street and Park Street on the east; and Newtonville Avenue, Eldredge Street, and Church Street on the south—has 2,151 residents.

Of this population, 2,127 residents, nearly 99 percent, identified themselves as being of one race, with 90 percent of these respondents identifying themselves as White. The next largest racial group is Asian, accounting for 6.1 percent of the population. Overall racial breakdowns citywide are similar to the Newton Corner target neighborhood. However, the City's percentage of Black (1.5 percent) and Asian (7.8 percent) residents is slightly higher than in the target neighborhood. Only 2.6 percent of the White population is Hispanic or Latino in the Newton Corner target neighborhood. This percentage nearly matches the 2.5 percent of White Hispanics or Latinos found citywide.

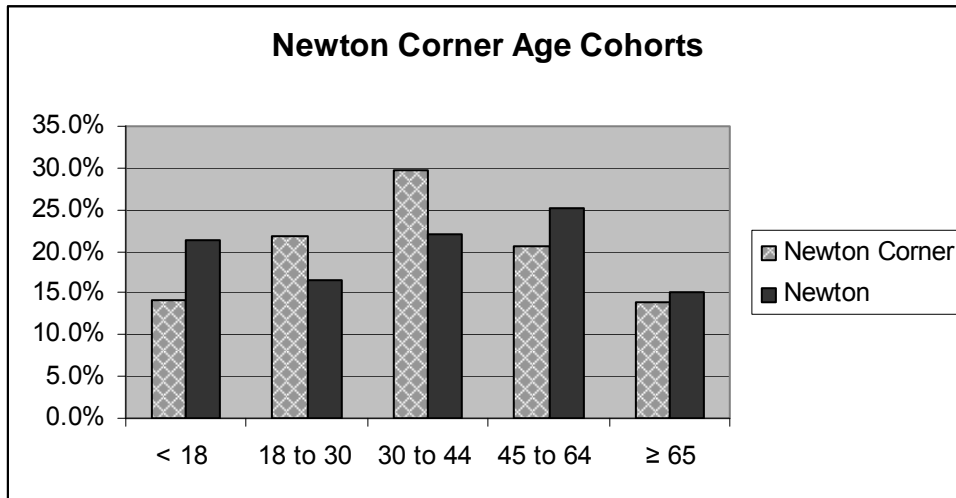
Figure 17: Racial Composition – Newton Corner Target Neighborhood



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) Table P3

Nearly 30 percent of the target neighborhood residents fall into the 30 to 44-year-old category, which is almost 8 percent more than the City as a whole. A difference in age breakdowns is also notable in the 18 years and under category – 7.2 percent more of this cohort is found citywide.

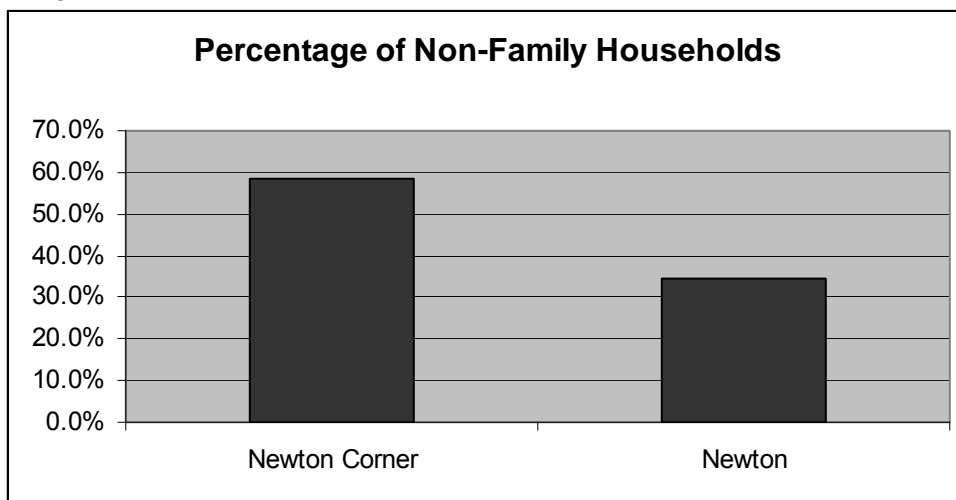
Figure 18: Age Cohorts – Newton Corner Target Neighborhood



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) Table P12

There are 1,040 households in the Newton Corner target neighborhood. The majority (58.7 percent) of the households are non-family households and 72.6 percent of these non-family households are one-person households. Compared to the citywide population, the target neighborhood has 24.3 percent more non-family households. Considering that the majority of households are unrelated it follows that only 18.1 percent of households have at least one child or youth present. This percentage is 14.2 percent less than the percentage of households with at least one minor (32.3 percent) citywide.

Figure 19: Percentage of Non-Family Households – Newton Corner Target Neighborhood



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) Table P19

Of the 1,040 households, 23.7 percent have at least one resident aged 65 or older. This percentage is about 4 percent less than the number of households containing at least one elderly individual (65 years and over) citywide. The majority (63 percent) of elderly

(65 years and over) in the target neighborhood live alone. The opposite is true for elderly households citywide who more commonly live in two-person households.

The majority (60 percent) of the working population (sixteen years and older) in the Newton Corner target neighborhood is employed in management and professional occupations; this percentage is 5.3 percent less than the number of working individuals employed in the same sector citywide. It follows that a higher percentage of this target neighborhood's working population is employed in service; sales and office; construction, extraction, and maintenance; and production, transportation, and material moving than citywide. This difference is the greatest in the production, transportation, and material moving sector which employ 3.3 percent more of workers in the Newton Corner target neighborhood.

Table 69: Percentage of the Working Population (16+) Employed by Occupation

Occupation	Newton Corner Target Neighborhood	Newton
Management, professional, & related	60.0%	65.3%
Service	10.1%	7.8%
Sales and office	21.8%	21.0%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	0.0%	2.5%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	1.7%	0.1%
Production, transportation, and material moving	6.3%	3.3%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) Table: QT-P27

A total of 20.3 percent of this working population takes public transportation, which is 8 percent more than workers citywide. Of the workers who use public transit 95.2 percent ride the bus<sup>1</sup> and 4.8 percent utilize the subway.

There are 1,080 housing units in the Newton Corner target neighborhood of which 96.3 percent are occupied. Renters occupy the majority of homes (63.8 percent) in the target neighborhood which is unusual in Newton where owner occupied homes dominate the population (69.5 percent). Of the 386 owner-occupied units, 34.7 percent of owners (134 units) have lived in the neighborhood for more than 25 years.

A total of 1,812 disabilities were reported in the Newton Corner target neighborhood. The majority of disabilities apply to working-age adults (60.7 percent) and elderly/retired populations (38.4 percent). The categories of disabilities with the highest numbers are

<sup>1</sup> Twelve MBTA buses run through the target neighborhood: Dedham Mall – Watertown via Oak Hill (#52), Watertown Bus Yard – Kenmore Square (#57), Watertown Square – Haymarket Square (#193), Brighton – Federal & Franklin Sts. (#501), Watertown Square – Copley Square (#502), Brighton – Copley Square (#503), Watertown Square – Franklin & Federal Sts. (#504), Roberts – Newton Corner (#553), Waverly Square – Newton Corner (#554), Riverside Station – Franklin & Federal Sts. (#555), Waltham Highlands – Newton Corner (#556), and Auburndale – Newton Corner (#558).

“Go-outside-home disability” with 30.6 percent, “Employment disability” with 22.2 percent, and “Physical disability” with 18.7 percent.

### **Needs Assessment Process and Findings**

During the five-year period covered by this Consolidated Plan, Newton Corner will be the recipient of neighborhood improvement funds in FY13. In preparation for this future funding round, the Newton Corner Advisory Committee (NCAC) convened for three meetings to identify community needs, develop strategies for addressing the needs, set priorities, and plan projects.

Housing and Community Development Division staff began the Newton Corner needs assessment process in the Spring of 2009. Staff requested information from City departments as well as conducted a windshield survey of the neighborhood. The first needs assessment meeting was held on June 23, 2009. Staff presented a preliminary list of current needs as identified by City departments as well as reported on the unmet needs from the previous five-year plan. The NCAC members and interested citizen discussed the unmet needs and provided additional concerns.

The Newton Corner Advisory Committee met again on October 20, 2009 to develop strategies and objectives for addressing the target area’s needs. Using the needs assessment, the strategic plan and funding estimates provided by staff, the NCAC was able to identify their main priorities and voted on their proposed projects for FY13 on January 26, 2010.

### ***Traffic Needs***

Traffic is a major concern in the Newton Corner target neighborhood due to the presence of several entrances and exits for the Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90) as well as a large, complex rotary over the Turnpike and around the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Based on data from the Newton Police Accident Report for the period of August 1, 2008 through August 1, 2009, there were 222 auto accidents in the target area. Not surprisingly, almost all of the problems intersections were clustered around the Newton Corner Circle, a major transportation center for area residents and commuters alike. Upon closer examination of the figures, nearly 75 percent of all accidents occurred in or just outside of the Newton Corner Circle.

The top intersections/locations reporting five or more accidents in one year are, in descending order:

Rank	Location	# Accidents
1.	Centre Street and Centre Avenue	42
2.	Centre Street and Washington Street	28
3.	300-320 Washington Street- Crowne Plaza Hotel & Gateway Plaza	24
4.	287 Washington Street- Pizzeria Uno	11
5.	275 Centre Street- Bertucci's	9
6.	Centre Avenue and Washington Street	8
7.	371 Washington Street- Honda Village	6
8.	Centre Street and Church Street	5
9.	Park Street and Centre Avenue	5
10.	Richardson Street Municipal Parking Lot	5

The NCAC is committed to improving safety in the neighborhood, primarily pedestrian safety. The committee is looking to continue efforts on Church Street through more road-defining curb extensions and one or more crosswalks. They would also like to institute traffic calming at Park and Vernon Streets, next to Bigelow Middle School. In the past, the NCAC has considered other pedestrian safety improvements, such as specialty crosswalks, flashing signals and signs, and audible accessible pedestrian signals.

The City of Newton and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) will continue to work together to address neighborhood issues stemming from the Turnpike's presence in the neighborhood. The January 2003 report *Effects of the July 1, 2002 Boston Extension (I-90) Toll Increase on Newton Neighborhoods* identified a number of short- and long-term mitigation projects. The state has taken some steps to improve the quality of life in Newton Corner by providing the majority of the funds for the new traffic signal at Park and Tremont Streets. The City hopes that this partnership will continue and will result in more projects to counteract the negative impacts of the Turnpike.

The City's Traffic Engineer has recommended that any intersections with a traffic signal be upgraded with accessible pedestrian signals that feature a numerical countdown. According to the City's GIS data, there are seven traffic signals in the target area. The City's Transportation Planner and the City's Traffic Engineer encourage the installation of bike racks, especially near bus stops. Many bus shelters in the City are outdated and unsightly and are in need of replacement. Where possible, bike lane striping is encouraged. There is insufficient parking in Newton Corner, a dense and heavily traveled neighborhood, especially by commuters. The creation of more metered parking may be beneficial for the area's residents. Despite all the traffic needs, the Traffic Engineer expressed concerns over too much new and expensive equipment as the traffic maintenance budget is only level funded, so too many new fixtures would reduce the City's ability for proper maintenance.

### *Parks/Open Space Needs*

In January 2006, the Parks and Recreation Department finalized a Five Year Park Assessment Plan and Evaluation based on staff analyses on the conditions of a variety of park amenities, accessibility and aesthetics. For overall quality ratings of the parks in the Newton Corner target area, the parks are listed from best to worst: Farlow Park, Carleton Park, Chaffin Park, Charlesbank Park, and Boyd Park. This ranking may not accurately reflect current conditions as Boyd Park was substantially renovated in the Summer and Fall of 2006 and the Parks and Recreation Assessment report was released in January 2006.

Upon examination of specific poorly-rated features at all the parks (those items receiving a 1 or a 2 on a five scale), Charlesbank Park is most in need of a new playground and overall aesthetics. At Farlow Park, the amenity in most disrepair is the drinking fountain. With respect to accessibility needs, the playgrounds at Charlesbank Park and Farlow Park are not universally accessible.

Since the last Consolidated Plan and the Parks & Recreation Assessment report were released, several park improvements have occurred. In 2008 at Chaffin Park, the main walkway was regraded, reconstructed, and lined with ornamental granite coping befitting of this historic park. A group of private citizens raised a substantial sum of money to rebuild through volunteers the Farlow Tot Lot adjacent to the Newton Corner Branch Library. CDBG funds assisted the project by purchasing the fencing, benches, swings, and a spring rider. Also in 2008, CDBG funds were used to create a master plan for Charlesbank Park. Both Farlow Park and Chaffin Park underwent historic master planning in 2006 with Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The community is pursuing additional CPA funds to restore the pond and bridge. In late 2005, portions of Boyd Park were renovated including complete reconstruction of a dilapidated basketball court, a widened walkway, new accessible water fountain, two new decorative trash cans, three new recycled plastic benches, one recycled plastic picnic table, a hopscotch court, and a foursquare court.

The Charlesbank Park Master Plan addresses the numerous needs at this park which include a new playground with rubberized safety surfacing, new retaining wall, enhanced accessibility through extensive regrading, new trees, more efficient layout, and improved aesthetics. Funded with CPA money, the Farlow Park and Chaffin Park Historic Planning and Design Landscape Restoration Report primarily addresses the needs of the passive recreation sections of these historic parks. Specific recommendations include redesigned walkways, an historically appropriate bridge, possible revival of a pond, installation of replica historic benches, restoration of an abandoned entrance off Eldredge Street, ornamental fencing dividing the passive and active zones, rebuild and repoint Chaffin stone wall, historic tree pruning and tree placards, as well as landscaping around each entrance.

The Parks and Recreation Department supports implementation of the master plans for Charlesbank Park, Farlow Park and Chaffin Park. Furthermore, they recommend that Big Belly solar-powered trash compactors replace existing trash receptacles in all parks as they have proven to be successful in saving energy and reducing trash. Parks and Recreation also indicated that firm routes should be installed on all playgrounds for universal accessibility.



## Public Infrastructure Needs

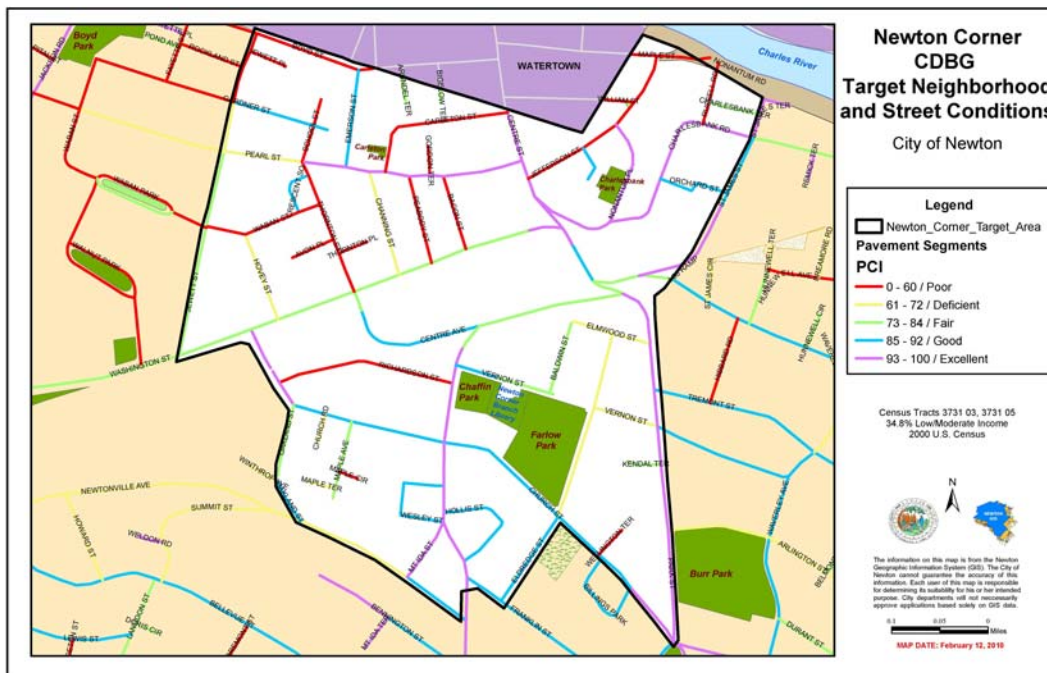
There are fifty-one streets contained within the Newton Corner target area thirty-nine public streets and thirteen private ways, with one street having both public and private portions.

The City of Newton hired Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) to perform a detailed condition evaluation on Newton's 298.3 miles of public and private roadways to build a pavement management system. The VHB Pavement Management Report Summary released in June 2009 focused on the 275.6 miles of public roadway.

From Fall 2008 until Spring 2009, VHB assessed the roadway network and recorded pavement conditions as well as inventoried all sidewalks, curbs, and ramps. Each street is rated for "the severity and extent of nine major pavement distresses..." and then entered into a weighted formula to arrive at a Pavement Condition Index (PCI). PCI is measured on a scale of zero to one hundred, with one hundred representing a pavement in perfect condition and zero describing a road in impassable condition. The average PCI for Newton's road network was found to be a 72. A PCI of 72 represents a road in fair condition that would soon be in need of resurfacing." (VHB Pavement Management Report Summary- June 2009)

There are twelve public streets that categorized as "Poor Condition" meaning they have a PCI of 60 or below. Streets in this category will require some form of base improvement, such as reclamation or full depth reconstruction. The streets in the bottom tier include Bacon Street, Boyd Street, Carleton Street, Jefferson Street, Maple Street, Peabody Street, Richardson Street, Russell Road, School Street, Thornton Street, Waban Street, and William Street. See Map 6.

Map 6: Newton Corner CDBG Target Neighborhood and Streets by Condition



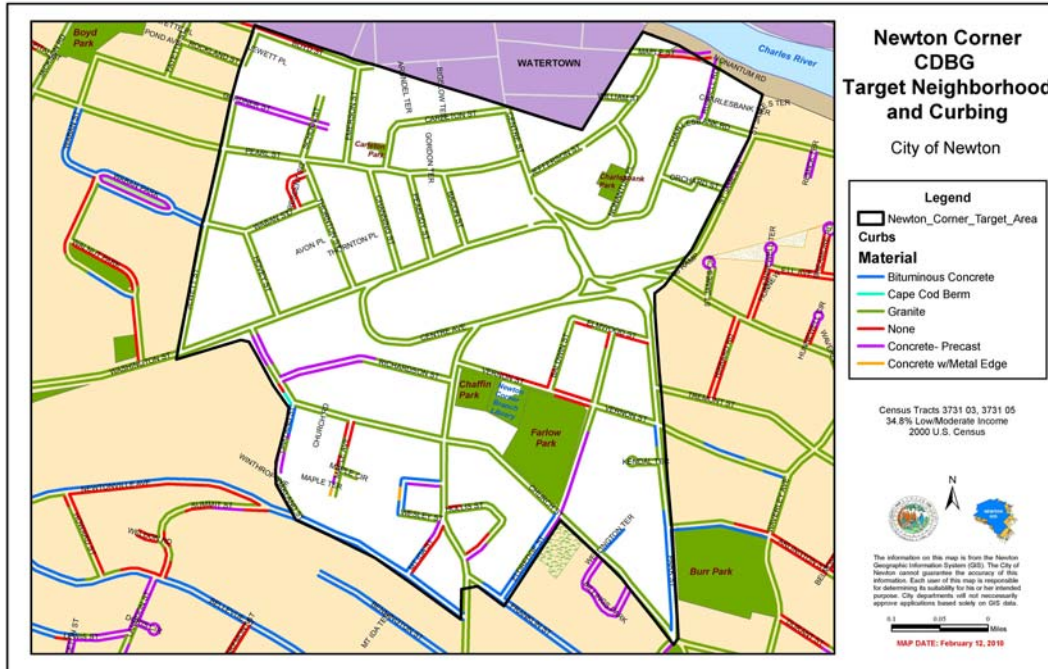


Over three-fourths of the sidewalks in the target area are comprised of concrete sidewalks, the preferred material for sidewalks. Only 2.6 percent of the sidewalk network is lacking firm accessible sidewalks (about 1,700 linear feet) and the remaining 21 percent is asphalt or brick sidewalks. See Map 7. With respect to street curbing, nearly eighty percent of the curbing framework is granite, the preferred material for street curbs. Only 4.9 percent of the street network lacks curbing (about 3,300 linear feet) and the remaining fifteen percent is either asphalt or concrete curbing. See Map 8.

Map 7: Newton Corner CDBG Target Neighborhood and Sidewalks by Material



Map 8: Newton Corner CDBG Target Neighborhood and Curbing by Material



In the past, the NCAC has viewed street improvements solely as a City function and were reluctant to commit CDBG funds for street reconstruction or infrastructure improvement projects. When a street is reconstructed, the committee advocates that the following elements be incorporated into the design: elimination or reduction of wire pollution, installation of decorative and appropriate-scaled streetlights, planting of street trees and traffic-calming measures.

Over time and based on funding availability, the City intends to replace all street signs with new signs that feature a 50% larger letter size (6" vs. 4") and a much more reflective material for improved nighttime visibility.

### ***Public Facilities Needs***

There are five publicly owned buildings or properties in the target area. These include Underwood School, Newton Corner Branch Library, Fire Station #1, Richardson Street Parking Lot and the Newton Corner Parking Lot (off Pearl Street). The Newton Corner Parking Lot is located in a primarily commercial district, while the Richardson Lot is situated in a primarily residential area. The Richardson Street Parking Lot is unattractive and in disrepair and could benefit from new trees and low-maintenance shrubs. The Newton Corner Branch Library was renovated in 2006 with Community Preservation Act funds and does not have any major needs. However this branch library was closed in 2008 due to funding cuts and remains shuttered though the community is investigating ways to reopen it privately. The Public Buildings Department has identified a few needs at Fire Station #1, located at 241 Church Street, including renovation and accessibility improvements to the first floor bathroom and the main entrance. This building also serves as a polling place.

## Unmet Needs from FY06-10 Consolidated Plan

Many of the needs in the Newton Corner Target Neighborhood from the FY06-10 Consolidated Plan remain unmet. Fortunately, several needs were met during that period through the CDBG program.

For parks, Boyd Park experienced a partial renovation, Chaffin Park received a reconstructed walkway, a new tot lot was created at Farlow Park with private and CDBG funds, and a master plan was completed for Charlesbank Park. Using CPA funds, historic master plans were completed for Farlow Park and Chaffin Park. The City is now well positioned to realize the improvements recommended in the three park master plans as soon as funding is made available.

Additional needs that were addressed between FY06-10 include the planting of 42 trees throughout the target area as well as the installation of new handrails along the rear walkway of the Newton Corner Branch Library. For infrastructure and traffic improvements, a speed display sign was installed on Pearl Street to calm traffic and a new crosswalk was created across the Newton Corner Circle by Park Street. Several other traffic initiatives have been planned and are nearing implementation including a new traffic island on Church Street and pedestrian safety modifications on Centre Street. The following list demonstrates the unmet needs:

- More traffic-calming measures
- Bury overhead utilities
- Install decorative street lighting
- Continuation of pedestrian safety and accessibility improvements, especially in and around the Newton Corner Circle
- Beautification of City-owned property
- Better seating and trash receptacles at parks
- More durable and accessible safety surfacing for playgrounds
- Attractive, informative, uniform park signage
- Playground equipment catering to a wide range of ages
- Improvements to Charlesbank Park
- Pedestrian improvements to the Charles River Reservation
- Conduct implementation study for MTA improvements & feasibility study for a footbridge over the Turnpike

## Prominent Neighborhood Needs

After reviewing the list of needs from City staff, the unmet needs from the previous five-year Consolidated Plan, as well as inserting new items, the NCAC members agreed on the following neighborhood needs, which are in no particular order.

PARKS & TREES	INFRASTRUCTURE	TRAFFIC	PUBLIC FACILITIES & OTHER
Implement master plan for Farlow Park	Reconstruct streets, sidewalks and curbing in poor condition	Upgrade at existing intersections with accessible pedestrian signals with countdown features ( <i>Church &amp; Washington, etc.</i> )	Reopen Newton Corner Branch Library, publicly or using volunteers
Implement master plan for Chaffin Park	Burial of overhead utilities	Replace existing bus shelters with new shelters	
Implement master plan for Charlesbank Park	More ornamental sidewalks (e.g. brick/paved lined) in select locations	Install bike racks, especially by heavily used bus stops, like express routes	Renovate and make accessible the first floor bathrooms and main entrance of Fire Station #1
Install Big Belly solar-powered trash receptacles at all parks, couple with recycling bins	New street signs with larger, more reflective print	Lack of parking in Newton Corner, consider more metered parking	
		Improvements at problematic intersections with high incidence of accidents ( <i>points around the circle, Church &amp; Centre</i> )	Development of undeveloped lot(s) off Hovey Street for community use
Create firm accessible route to play equipment		Crosswalk across Church Street by Richardson/Oakland/YMCA	
New and replacement trees in residential areas, parks and other city properties		Consider specialty crosswalks for added visibility and safety	Paint a mural on the Oakland Street retaining wall
		Redesigned guardrail system on Charlesbank Road/St. James Street	
Drainage improvements and new tree plantings at Boyd Park		General traffic calming- implement Park & Vernon traffic calming plan	Efforts to reduce litter in commercial districts and residential streets abutting commercial districts (signage, more trash receptacles, more clean ups, more responsibility placed on business owners)
		Implement recommendations from the 2003 Mass Turnpike Report- complete an implementation study, consider a footbridge, sound barriers	
		More attractive and appropriately scaled street lights for residential areas	
		Enforcement of traffic and parking violations on residential streets, better signage, and encourage use of public parking lots	
		Stripe bike lanes where possible	

# NEWTON CORNER STRATEGIC PLAN

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The Strategic Plan for the Newton Corner target neighborhood is broken down into the following subsections:

- **Objectives and Strategies** – This subsection lists the objectives and strategies developed to address the identified needs.
- **Funding Estimates** – This subsection lists the cost estimates for the strategies developed to address the identified needs.
- **Projects** – This subsection lists the projects that were selected by the advisory committee to be undertaken during the period of the FY11-15 Consolidated Plan.
- **Proposed Goals and Accomplishments** – This subsection details the proposed goals and accomplishments for the year that neighborhood improvements will be funded in Newton Corner.
- **Obstacles to Meeting Underserved Needs** – This subsection describes the challenges of addressing the objectives and strategies in the target area.
- **Target Neighborhood Map** – This map provides a graphic representation of the planned project locations.

## Objectives and Strategies

Although efforts will be made to address all identified needs, the development of priorities allows Housing and Community Development staff to focus on what the residents view as the most pressing needs in their community. The development of objectives and strategies is the first part of the prioritization process.

### *Parks/Open Space Improvements*

**Objective:** To implement park master plans

**Strategies:**

- Continue to implement phases of the Farlow Park Master Plan
- Continue to implement phases of the Chaffin Park Master Plan
- Implement the Charlesbank Park Master Plan
- Implement the Carleton Park Master Plan (to be completed in 2010)

**Objective:** To improve the quality and accessibility of the Newton Corner parks

**Strategies:**

- New and replacement trees in parks and greenspaces
- Install Big Belly solar-powered trash receptacles in all parks
- Place recycling containers next to trash receptacles
- Drainage improvements at Boyd Park



- Create firm accessible routes on playgrounds

### ***Traffic Improvements***

**Objective:** To improve pedestrian safety and connectivity

- Strategy:**
- Upgrade at existing intersections with accessible pedestrian signals with countdown features
  - Create a crosswalk across Church Street by the Richardson-Oakland-YMCA area
  - Consider specialty crosswalks for added visibility and safety

**Objective:** To better control and clarify traffic patterns to improve public safety

- Strategies:**
- Traffic calming, particularly at Park & Vernon Streets and Pearl Street
  - Redesign guardrail systems on Charlesbank Road at St. James Street
  - Improvements at intersections with a high incidence of accidents
  - Implement the recommendations from the Turnpike studies

**Objective:** To encourage and facilitate public transportation and alternate forms of transportation

- Strategies:**
- Replace existing bus shelters with new shelters
  - Install bike racks, especially nearby heavily used bus stops, like express routes
  - Stripe bike lanes where possible

**Objective:** To protect residential streets from commuter traffic and parking

- Strategy:**
- Enforce parking violations on residential streets and in public parking lots as well as encourage use of public parking lots through better signage

### ***Public Infrastructure Improvements***

**Objective:** To improve the safety, accessibility, and aesthetics of public streets and sidewalks

- Strategies:**
- Reconstruct streets, sidewalks and curbing in poor condition
  - Install concrete sidewalks where they are missing
  - Install granite curbing where missing
  - Install accessible, code compliant curb cuts where needed
  - More attractive and appropriately-scaled street lights in residential areas

**Objective:** To beautify the neighborhood

- Strategy:**
- New and replacement trees in residential areas and on other city properties

### ***Public Facilities Improvements & Other***

**Objective:** To support, improve and beautify community facilities

- Strategies:**
- Reopen the Newton Corner Branch Library (cannot use CDBG Neighborhood Improvements funds for this need)
  - Paint a mural on the Oakland Street retaining wall



**Objective:** To improve the quality of life in the Newton Corner Target Area

- Strategies:**
- Development of undeveloped lots off Hovey Street for community use
  - Reduce litter in and around commercial districts

## Funding Estimates

Below are the cost estimates for the strategies developed to address the identified needs in the Newton Corner target neighborhood. These cost estimates are a crucial factor in the planning process as strategies may often require more funding than is allocated through the CDBG neighborhood improvements program. For better or worse, funding availability plays a paramount role in which CDBG projects can and should be pursued. If a cost estimate exceeds the CDBG funding and there are no funds to be leveraged, developing a project to carry out the strategy may not be a prudent use of CDBG funds.

Strategies	Cost Information	Estimate
<b>Parks/Open Space Improvements</b>		
<b>Continue to implement phases of the Farlow Park Master Plan</b>	Improvements to these historic parks are planned in three phases. Phase 1 which includes testing and design work is underway and funded with CPA money. Phases 2 and 3 cost \$266,450 and \$199,477, respectively for a total of \$465,927. It is hoped that CPA funds will continue to address portions of the master plan after the completion of Phase 1. A successful CPA application has additional funding sources. CDBG money could be used leverage more CPA dollars.	\$465,927
<b>Continue to implement phases of the Chaffin Park Master Plan</b>		
<b>Continue to implement phases of the Charlesbank Park Master Plan</b>	Phase 1, which includes a new playground with rubberized safety surfacing and new accessible entrance, will be completed in 2010. Phase 2 is comprised of a new retaining wall with ornamental fencing, field renovations/regrading, benches, new border fencing, park signage, and additional trees and shrubs. Phase 2 is estimated at around \$145,000.	\$145,000
<b>Implement the Carleton Park Master Plan (to be completed in 2010)</b>	Because the master planning has not even begun, a scope of work or a cost estimate cannot be determined. However, if it is a priority for the committee, the NCAC should earmark some funds so at least a portion of the plan may be addressed. It is not expected that the improvements would amount to less than \$20,000.	\$20,000
<b>Install Big Belly solar-powered trash receptacles in all parks. Add recycling receptacles next to trash receptacles.</b>	Big Belly trash receptacles cost about \$4,500, installed. Big Belly makes matching recycling receptacles so that the trash and recycling containers look like one unit. It would cost \$1,500 to add on a recycling unit. Receptacles could go in at Chaffin Park, Farlow Park, and Boyd Park. It is debatable whether these receptacles should go into Charlesbank Park and Carleton Park due to their size.	\$4,500-\$18,000

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Cost Information</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
<b>Drainage improvements at Boyd Park</b>	The main walkway in the park that runs adjacent to the playground from the school to Pond Avenue, has some low sections that flood and in the winter freeze over resulting in a hazardous situation. A solution has not been developed so there is not a cost estimate. However, drainage improvements can be complicated and costly and it is not expected that the cost would be less than \$15,000.	\$15,000-?
<b>Create firm accessible routes on playgrounds</b>	Ideally, when playgrounds are reconstructed, the entire playground will become universally accessible - like what is planned at Charlesbank Park. To retrofit a playground, rubberized tiles or poured-in-place rubberized paths can be installed at select points within the playground at a cost of \$20 per square foot. Each playground must be assessed individually on the number of play features and the layout. Therefore a cost estimate cannot be accurately provided. There are three playgrounds that could be upgraded with accessible routes on the playground: Underwood School Playground, Farlow Tot Lot and Boyd Park. It is expected that this work would not cost less than \$10,000 per park.	\$10,000-?
<b>Traffic Improvements</b>		
<b>Install audible accessible pedestrian signals with countdown features at intersections with traffic signals</b>	There are seven traffic signals in the target area. There are a few locations, including the intersection of Park & Tremont Streets that have accessible pedestrian signals with the countdown feature. Up to four other locations would need to be upgraded. For a typical four-way intersection, an estimate of \$8,000 is used.	\$8,000-\$32,000
<b>Create a crosswalk across Church Street by the Richardson-Oakland-YMCA area</b>	Engineering staff created a conceptual plan to calm traffic on Church Street which was comprised of three main components: 1) a new traffic island next to the entrance of the YMCA (90% complete); 2) curb bump outs at Richardson Street and Church Street - estimated at \$40,000; and 3) a formal crosswalk with flashing warning lights across Church Street just after the Turnpike bridge at Richardson Street - estimated at \$25,000.	\$25,000-\$65,000
<b>Consider specialty crosswalks for added visibility and safety</b>	Specialty crosswalks could be installed on recently repaved streets. An average cost for a specialty crosswalk would be \$15,000. No specific locations have been suggested.	\$15,000-?
<b>Traffic calming, particularly at Park &amp; Vernon Streets and Pearl Street</b>	Engineering staff developed a conceptual plan for traffic calming at Park & Vernon Sts. but have not prepared a cost estimate. Based on the recent work at the Church St. traffic island, the three bump outs with new curb cuts could cost \$45,000-\$50,000. On Pearl St., additional traffic calming measures could be considered such as a raised crosswalk or neck downs/bump outs. The Pearl St. work would likely cost at least \$20,000.	\$20,000-\$70,000

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Cost Information</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
<b>Redesigned guardrail system on Charlesbank Road at St. James Street</b>	The guardrail is struck a couple times a year probably by larger trucks as the guardrail sits fairly high above the street. A new guardrail system with more reflective elements could be installed at a cost ranging from \$5,000-\$8,000. The concern is that trucks may still continue to hit it despite the warnings due to the narrowness of the turn.	\$5,000-\$8,000
<b>Improvements at intersections with a high incidence of accidents</b>	The intersections with the highest number of accidents are located around the Circle. There are a few locations such as the intersection of Centre Street and Church Street as well as the Richardson Street Parking Lot that had five accidents in one year. Each problem intersection has unique needs and site constraints, therefore it is difficult to estimate the cost of safety improvements. A minimum budget of \$5,000 is suggested. No specific locations have been suggested.	\$5,000-?
<b>Implement the recommendations from the Turnpike studies</b>	In 2006, Central Transportation Planning Staff of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization released a study of improvements around the Newton Corner Circle. There were five main recommendations: 1) Improve signage around rotary - \$50,000 2) Improve pavement markings around rotary- \$25,000 3) Convert existing pedestrian signal at Centre & Centre into a full traffic signal- \$50,000 4) Coordinate timing of signals- \$150,000 5) Signalize Galen Street southbound right turns- \$75,000 The NCAC hopes to address #3 through a trial of a full traffic signal later this year. It is suggested that the City strengthen its ties with MassDOT and try to address the remaining items with state funds.	\$300,000
<b>Replace existing bus shelters with new shelters or add new shelters where needed</b>	There are two bus shelters in the target area: 1) Centre Avenue (between Centre Street and Park Street), and 2) Washington Street @ Bacon Street. It is estimated that a new shelter could cost \$10,000-15,000, installed. However the City may be interested in joining the MBTA shelter replacement program in which a private company installs new shelters and maintains them at no cost to the MBTA or the City. The program operates on the proceeds of advertisements inside the shelters.	\$20,000-\$30,000
<b>Install bike racks, especially nearby heavily used bus stops, like express routes</b>	Newton Corner is a major transportation hub that includes twelve bus lines and access to the Massachusetts Turnpike. Running parallel with the Turnpike, the commuter rail line goes through but does not stop in the target area. There are eight intersections/areas where the buses stop with over twenty individual bus stops. Staff is unaware of any bike racks next to bus stops. A bike rack next to a bus stop could cost up to \$2,000 for each rack, installed.	\$2,000-\$16,000

Strategies	Cost Information	Estimate
<b>Support bicycle transportation through bike lane striping, signage and roadway improvements where possible; Coordinate efforts with Bike Newton</b>	<p>Newton has no official bike routes. Bike Newton has a draft plan that identifies the best options for Designated Bike Routes and Preferred Bike Routes. Centre Street was chosen as a Designated Bike Route (with striped lanes). The length of Centre Street within the target area is 3,200 feet. If bike lanes were striped on both sides of the street, at a cost of \$.34 per linear foot (4" reflective lines), the cost would be nearly \$2,200. Washington Street has been identified as a Preferred Bicycle Route. For the Preferred Routes, the only changes would be to install "Share the Road" signs along the route and bike parking near major destinations/village centers. These signs are estimated at \$300 each.</p>	<p>\$300-\$3,100</p>
<b>Enforce parking violations on residential streets and in public parking lots as well as encourage use of public parking lots through better signage</b>	<p>Parking enforcement is not a CDBG eligible activity. However parking signs may be funded, though these signs are inexpensive and could likely be covered by the City. No CDBG funding is recommended.</p>	<p>ZERO</p>
<b>Public Infrastructure Improvements</b>		
<b>Reconstruct streets, sidewalks and curbing in poor condition</b>	<p>VHB conducted a pavement management study of all of Newton's infrastructure. Each street was issued a Pavement Condition Index (PCI) number. The PCI rating goes from 0-100, with 100 representing a perfect street. Streets receiving a value of 60 or less are in need of full-depth reconstruction. Twelve streets in the target area are in the bottom tier. For complete reconstruction, an estimate of \$62.30 per square yard is used and addresses improvements to the street, sidewalk, and curbs as needed. The cost to reconstruct these streets would be nearly \$1,063,984. None of the individual street reconstruction work exceeds Newton Corner's future estimated allocation. CDBG funds could be used to pay for the improvements in whole or in part.</p>	<p>\$1,063,984</p>
<b>Install concrete sidewalks where they are missing</b>	<p>Based on the VHB Pavement Management Report, only 2.6% of the sidewalk network lacks sidewalks. For a typical five foot wide concrete sidewalk, an estimate of \$50 per square yard is used. In the Newton Corner target area, it would cost \$47,086 to add sidewalks where there are none.</p>	<p>\$47,086</p>

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Cost Information</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
<b>Install granite curbing where missing</b>	Based on the VHB Pavement Management Report, over three-fourths of the curbing network is granite, the preferred type of street edging. Only 4.9% of the curbing network is missing. This translates into 3,300 linear feet of missing curbing on ten streets. To fill in these missing sections, at a cost of \$40 a linear foot, the work is estimated at \$133,026.	\$133,026
<b>Installation of accessible, code compliant curb cuts where needed</b>	Based on the VHB Pavement Management Report, there are 21 missing curb cuts and three curb cuts rated in Poor condition. To create accessible concrete curb cuts in these locations, it would cost \$5,000 per curb cut, for a total of \$120,000.	\$120,000
<b>More attractive and appropriately-scaled street lights in residential areas</b>	Most of the area has cobrahead street lights though some streets have ornamental street lights. Funded through the CPA program, (on Washington Park in Newtonville), the cobrahead lights were swapped with ornamental street lights. This work is estimated at \$5,000 per light. Assuming the average residential street has ten street lights, the cost for new ornamental lights would at least be \$50,000.	\$50,000
<b>New and replacement trees in residential areas, parks and other city properties</b>	There is no information on how many trees could be planted throughout the target area. On average, a new tree planting costs \$500. In order to create a visible impact, a minimum of twenty trees is suggested, at an estimated cost of \$10,000.	\$10,000
<b>Public Facilities Improvements &amp; Other</b>		
<b>Paint a mural on the Oakland Street retaining wall</b>	The retaining wall that separates Oakland Street measures about 450 sq. ft. To have a mural professionally designed and painted, the cost could be \$5,000-\$10,000. Costs can be reduced by having community volunteers paint the mural.	\$5,000-\$10,000
<b>Development of undeveloped lots off Hovey Street for community use</b>	There are developable lots on both sides of Hovey Street between the commercial buildings and the residential section. This is a dense section of Newton and more greenspace would be beneficial. Given the high cost of land in Newton, the CDBG program is not the best fit to acquire parcels. A better fit is through the CPA program or general City funds. Once acquired, the CDBG program may be able to add amenities to the site. No funding is recommended.	ZERO
<b>Reduce litter in and around commercial districts</b>	CDBG Neighborhood Improvement funds must be used in such a way as to primarily benefit the residents of the target area. Though reducing litter in commercial districts is a worthy pursuit, it is unlikely that this strategy meets eligibility requirements. No funding is recommended.	ZERO

At the January 26, 2010 meeting, the NCAC reviewed the funding estimates prepared by staff. Following the discussion of each of the items, members and interested citizens in attendance were asked to vote for their top priorities. Attendees were given five dot stickers and instructed to use their sticker votes in any combination they chose, e.g. all

five stickers on one need, five stickers on five different needs, two on one need and three stickers on three different needs, etc. The voting produced a consensus of five top priorities. Below are the results of the prioritization.

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Sticker Votes</b>
Continue to implement phases of the Charlesbank Park Master Plan	11
Create a crosswalk across Church Street by the Richardson-Oakland-YMCA area	10
Traffic calming, particularly at Park & Vernon Streets and Pearl Street	7
Implement the Carleton Park Master Plan (to be completed in 2010)	7
Continue to implement phases of the Farlow Park and Chaffin Park Master Plan	5
Improvements at intersections with a high incidence of accidents	4
Implement the recommendations from the Turnpike studies	4
New and replacement trees in residential areas, parks and other city properties	4
Install Big Belly solar-powered trash receptacles in all parks	4
Place recycling containers next to trash receptacles	3
Install bike racks, especially nearby heavily used bus stops, like express routes	2
Install concrete sidewalks where they are missing	2
Drainage improvements at Boyd Park	1
Reconstruct streets, sidewalks and curbing in poor condition	1
Paint a mural on the Oakland Street retaining wall	1
Install accessible pedestrian signals with countdown features at existing intersections with traffic signals	0
Consider specialty crosswalks for added visibility and safety	0
Redesigned guardrail systems on Charlesbank Road at St. James Street	0
Replace existing bus shelters with new shelters or add new shelters where needed	0
Support bicycle transportation through bike lane striping, signage and roadway improvements where possible; Coordinate efforts with Bike Newton	0
Enforce parking violations on residential streets and in public parking lots as well as encourage use of public parking lots through better signage	0
Create firm accessible routes on playgrounds	0
Install granite curbing where missing	0
Installation of accessible, code compliant curb cuts where needed	0
More attractive and appropriately-scaled street lights in residential areas	0
Development of undeveloped lots off Hovey Street for community use	0
Reduce litter in and around commercial districts	0

<b>Newton Corner Priority Objectives</b>
To implement park master plans
To improve pedestrian safety and connectivity
To better control and clarify traffic patterns to improve public safety



## Projects

Upon establishment of the highest priorities, NCAC members deliberated the best way to distribute the funding from the next allocation. The Newton Corner Advisory Committee recommended the following projects for CDBG funding in FY13.

### PROPOSED FY13 NEWTON CORNER NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

	Proposed Budget
<b><i>PARKS/OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENTS</i></b>	
• Charlesbank Park Improvements	\$50,000
• Carleton Park Improvements	\$25,000
• Farlow Park & Chaffin Park Improvements	\$5,000
<b><i>TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS</i></b>	
• Church Street Traffic Calming	\$40,000
• Park-Vernon Traffic Calming	\$40,000
<hr/>	
Estimated FY13 Allocation	\$160,000

## Proposed Goals and Accomplishments

The Newton Corner Advisory Committee has recommended five projects for FY13. Here are the proposed goals and expected accomplishments for these projects:

PROJECT	GOALS	ACCOMPLISHMENTS (# PUBLIC FACILITIES IMPROVED)
<b>Charlesbank Park Improvements</b>	Continue to implement components of the master plan such as the retaining wall and ornamental fencing	1 park
<b>Carleton Park Improvements</b>	Begin a phase one implementation of the master plan	1 park
<b>Farlow Park and Chaffin Park Improvements</b>	Continue to implement components of the master plans such as new benches, signs, etc. Use CDBG funds to leverage additional CPA funds	2 parks
<b>Church Street Traffic Calming</b>	Improve the public safety and accessibility of this intersection to facilitate safer vehicular and pedestrian movements	1 street
<b>Park-Vernon Traffic Calming</b>	Improve the public safety and accessibility of this intersection which is adjacent to Bigelow Middle School in order to facilitate safer vehicular and pedestrian movements	1 street
Total Public Facilities Improved		6

## **Obstacles to Meeting Underserved Needs**

The primary obstacle to meeting underserved needs is the lack of sufficient funding. Twenty-seven strategies, at a minimum cost of \$2.49 million, were identified in the Newton Corner target neighborhood by attendees at three public meetings held in Summer 2009 through January 2010. However, the projected CDBG funding for FY13 - \$160,000 - can fund only the top five priorities. In fact, the CDBG funding alone will not be sufficient for completing subsequent phases of the Charlesbank Park, Carleton Park, Farlow Park, and Chaffin Park master plans.

An additional obstacle to meeting underserved needs is the Aldermanic approval process for certain strategies that relate to traffic or roadway changes. The approval process, which includes public hearings, can be quite lengthy which often results in a more expensive project.

It is expected that the community will apply for additional Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to restore Farlow Park and Chaffin Park to its former grandeur, though obtaining CPA funds is very difficult and time-consuming.

One of the biggest hurdles to meeting underserved needs is the collaboration with state agencies. For instance, solving the noise, pollution, and traffic problems resulting from the Massachusetts Turnpike requires the cooperation of and funding from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

## Target Neighborhood Map

Map 9: Newton Corner Target Neighborhood and FY2013 Proposed Projects

